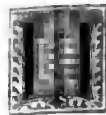


The Builder.

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UCH has been said by us about architectural competitions. Collected, it would form a small volume of somewhat extraordinary character,—not very creditable to human nature, and, if it could be forced into the undersanding of the public, could scarcely fail to effect important change, without the aid of further evidence of its necessity. This, however, is not to be hoped for; and we must go on month after month and year after year, repeating the same things in various shapes, and heaping evidence on evidence, in the hope of ultimately leading to a recognition of the evils which result from the present mode of mis-conducting competitions, and so of gradually inducing the adoption of a better system.

The abandonment of the practice altogether must not be thought of. The abuse of a good principle must not be allowed to lead to the abandonment of the principle, but the reformation of the abuse. We strenuously maintain, as we have done on previous occasions, that works for which the nation are to pay should be made the means of developing the rising talent of the nation: exciting the ardour of the young, inducing study, and cheering unaided genius by the exhibition of a path by which he may, assisted by himself alone, attain distinction and reward. But let it not be simply a snare and a deceit: let the race be to the swift, and the victory to the strong.

For the new Record-office, thus, the architects of the United Kingdom should unquestionably be appealed to, as they should also be for the proposed National Gallery when determined on, and such arrangements be made as would ensure the most careful examination and comparison of the designs, and a right and impartial judgment. Plenty of time should be given for the preparation of the designs, and an exhibition of them made to the public, for not too short a period, as properly insisted on by a correspondent last week, *previous* to the selection being made. Pretended concealment of names we would abandon. The only effect of it is to give the unscrupulous manœverer an advantage over the honourable and high-minded. Moreover, it is but right that those who have already fought the fight, and taken worthily a place in public esteem, should have the advantage which attaches to it. These points being attended to, and the court of examiners properly formed (knowledge no less than integrity being insisted on), a satisfactory result might be looked for with certainty.

We remarked many months ago, in a fact note to a communication, that if the history of competitions were written, it would display such an amount of rascality as would scarcely be believed. The remark was echoed from half-a-dozen quarters; its truth no one could deny: an enormous amount of rascality would indeed be exhibited. What injustice will not men, even honourable men, perpetrate, when

in committee; admitting no personal responsibility even to themselves! "Corporations have no bowels," says the old saw; and certainly a committee has no conscience. But at the same time this history would shew even a greater amount of ignorance,—ignorance of art, ignorance of the cost of its acquirement, ignorance of the actual position, responsibilities, and duties of architects. It is this which has led to more injustice and evil than want of integrity has. An architect's time is nothing; a design a pretty drawing, such as people make for their own amusement, of course; nothing else. On more than one occasion we have seen, say, five guineas paid ungrudgingly to a lithographer, for transferring a design to the stone, by the same person who considered a charge of exactly the same amount by the architect, for producing the design so transferred, an extortion for which he was "quite unprepared." In fact, we do not hesitate to say, strange as it may seem to the few, that a majority of employers would view the thing in the same light; a tolerably forcible illustration of the existing want of proper appreciation of the architect's duties to which we have already referred.

Disregard by committees of conditions imposed by themselves is of constant occurrence, without thought of the injustice to individuals which results. We will give one instance of it by a committee of, as we believe, very honourable men, who, strange to say, still consider, as a committee, that they have acted correctly.

Designs for a church were needed in the suburbs of London, and A. was invited to send plans in competition with B. C. and D. (the names being fully stated), with the understanding that the authors of the two designs best liked should each receive a premium, or one be employed and the other receive a premium. A. assented, simply stipulating that all the designs should be sent in on the same day, which was at once acceded to as a matter of course. His drawings being ready, he was told to retain them till a day should be named. Ultimately the day was named, and A. was directed to forward the plans. The committee met, and found there were no designs from C. and D. What was then their right course? Unquestionably, to award the premiums to the plans which were sent in (if not disposed to carry out either of them),—the authors of which had accepted the committee's invitation and complied with their conditions. The committee, however, thought differently. They determined on again sending to C. and D., and further, without any intimation to A. and B., to invite two other architects, E. and F., to submit plans. Many weeks passed, and A. had no tidings of his plans: when suddenly he received them back with thanks, and afterwards heard accidentally that the first premium had been awarded to D., who had not commenced his plans till some time after the day named for receiving them; and the second to E., with whom he had not been asked to compete, and whose name, indeed, had not been mentioned to him throughout the business!

The irregularity and injustice of such a proceeding must be obvious to all. Apart from the breach of a positive arrangement on the part of the committee, see what may occur under such circumstances to the injury of those who follow the instructions. Let us suppose that any one of the architects who prepared their plans after the first had been sent in, obtained the *slightest* idea of what was already before the committee,

how injuriously would that operate on those who had kept their faith. Admit it was but the merest glance by the merest accident (and if it did occur in the case to which we are referring, we are quite ready to believe that it was the merest glance); still every practised architect will know the advantage of even the smallest appreciable glimpse in a competition. This, however, is not the point. We wish, in stating this case, to make no personal reflections: we mention it simply as an instance of the constantly occurring injustice to architects done by a number of gentlemen handed as a committee (any one of whom singly would shrink from an improper act), through want of full appreciation of the engagements virtually, if not always ostensibly, made with architects, and want of proper consideration for an architect's labours.

Foremost amongst the stipulations abandoned by committees, has been the proposed cost of buildings. Designs, evidently requiring a much larger sum for their execution than that specified in the instructions, have been selected in preference to those of competitors who, being conscientious, had restricted display by the means placed at their disposal. The result of this has been, to lead many competing architects systematically to practise deceit,—the conviction being arrived at, that success was out of the question if the truth were told. This part of the subject involves several important questions, and would lead us to a relation of proceedings in connection with a competition for a charitable building, decided some time ago, for which we have not room in our present number. We must, therefore, postpone the consideration of it.

GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE ANALYZED.*

WHEN Brunelleschi, in remains of the grandeur of ancient Rome, collected materials for the exercise of his genius, he and others were doing at that day what has been extensively undertaken, and more successfully accomplished, in this. In both ages we are presented with a similar spectacle, that of men who could devote untiring labour to that best aid to the production of beautiful works of art, the accumulating those materials "from which invention must originate." But to form a complete parallel between the state of architecture then, and the position of the art now, along with the results of each epoch, much is wanting; and in the opinions frequently expressed upon the present condition of architectural taste, there is, as we have heretofore argued, much that is both true and false. It is not true that this is the only period in the history of architecture, in which the style of a previous age has been made to contribute largely to the external character of buildings; and far from feeling unqualified regret at every circumstance in the actual condition of the art, there is much that will distinctively mark the present century, and claim the gratitude of posterity. The first results of the labours of Brunelleschi and his contemporaries were buildings, which possibly displayed more inventive genius than those which have grown out of the materials amassed from the works of our ancestors; but they had nevertheless so great a resemblance to their prototypes, that it is not always easy to distinguish the churches of the early "revival" from the basilicas of the later days of the empire. But in the extent to which this collecting of materials has been carried of late years, and more especially in the manner in which the results have been arranged and preserved, the present age has paramount merits, and the future of the art will, we doubt not, after a short interval, admit of all that may now be wanting to draw the

* We have received some very interesting letters on this subject in connection with the Lincolnshire Lumber Auction competition, at present succeeded, including copies of a letter written to some of the magistrates by the father of one of a firm of architects who had submitted designs, pointing out the merits of his son's drawings,—*Messrs. G. & Co.* We give them the advantage of it.

* * * An Analysis of Gothic Architecture, illustrated by a Series of upwards of Seven Hundred Examples of Doorways, Windows, &c. &c., and accompanied with Remarks on the several details of an Ecclesiastical Edifice. By Raphael and J. Arthur Brandon, Architects. In Two Volumes.